

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 /065 W  
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R 180949Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 665  
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA  
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 4637

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PINR, GR  
SUBJECT: MITSOTAKIS COMES OUT

REF: ATHENS 3846 (NOTAL)

1. CONSTANTINE MITSOTAKIS (REFTEL) HAS NOW SURFACED OPENLY AND DECLARED HIS ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN GREEK POLITICS. BUT HIS APPEARANCE THUS FAR HAS MADE VERY FEW, AND MOSTLY SMALL, RIPPLES. THE VEHICLE FOR HIS RE-EMERGENCE WAS A LENGTHY AND LAVISH MAY 7 PRESS CONFERENCE FOR DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS, FOLLOWED BY A QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD. MITSOTAKIS MADE IT CLEAR IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE THAT HIS AIM IS TO TAKE OVER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE GREEK CENTER AND CENTER RIGHT AND TO PREPARE HIMSELF AS AN EVENTUAL ALTERNATIVE TO THE LEADERSHIP OF PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS.

2. IN THE COURSE OF HIS MAY 7 REMARKS MITSOTAKIS:  
--CRITICIZED CARAMANLIS FOR FAILING TO LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR A BETTER ORGANIZATION OF THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL LIFE. AT THE SAME TIME HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD BEEN  
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SUCCESSFUL IN LEADING GREECE THROUGH THE TRANSITION FROM MILITARY DICTATORSHIP TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT AND TACITLY RECOGNIZED THE CONTINUED PRESTIGE AND POPULARITY OF THE PRIME MINISTER.

--SINGLED OUT THE UNION F THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER (UDC) FOR HARSH CRTICISM, ARGUING THAT IT FAILED IN ITS OPPOSITION ROLE. HIS GOAL, HE SAID, WAS TO RE-CONSTITUTE THE CENTER

COALITION THAT ENABLED THE CENTER UNION, THE UDC PROGENITOR, TO GARNER 53 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN 1964. HE EXCLUDED ANDREAS PAPANDREOU FROM ANY ROLE INSUCH A RECONSTITUTED "CENTER". IF HIS CALL FOR RECONSTITUTION OF THE CENTER UNION WENT UNHEEDED, HE SAID HE WOULD ORGANIZE A NEW POLITICAL MOVEMENT.

--CUT HIMSELF OFF FROM THE FAR RIGHT, FORMER JUNTA SUPPORTERS, AND THE MONARCHISTS, BY TACITLY SUPPORTING THE 1974 PLEBISCITE THAT DECIDED AGAINST THE RETURN OF THE KING, BY ENDORSING THE LEGALIZATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY, AND BY COMPLAINING THAT THE PURGING OF PRO-JUNTA ELEMENTS FROM THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT GONE FAR ENOUGH.

--STATED THAT GREECE'S INTERESTS PLACE IT ON THE SIDE OF WESTERN EUROPE AND THE WEST IN GENERAL. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE TIME IS NOT RIGHT FOR GREECE'S FULL RETURN TO THE NATO ALLIANCE, WHICH IN ANY CASE MUST BE ON A BASIS OF EQUAL PARTNERSHIP AND "GIVE AND TAKE." HE ALSO STATED THAT THOUGH GREECE MUST LOOK TO THE WEST, IT SHOULD NOT IGNORE OPPORTUNITIES IN OTHER DIRECTIONS.

--TOOK A MODERATE, IF VAGUE, STAND ON THE GREEK-TURKISH CONFRONTATION. THUS HE CALLED FOR "ACCEPTABLE" AND "JUST" SOLUTIONS IN CYPRUS AND ON THE AEGEAN BUT REJECTED CONCESSIONS WHICH THREATEN GREECE'S "VESTED RIGHTS".

--ADVOCATED THE USE OF A SIMPLE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM IN THE NEXT ELECTIONS, WHICH HE SAID SHOULD BE HELD BY THE END OF 1977. (MUCH OF MITSOTAKIS' POLITICAL CONFIDENTIAL

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FUTURE DEPENDS, OF COURSE, ON HOW FAR, IF AT ALL, THE GOVERNMENT MOVES FROM THE PRESENT SYSTEM, WHICH MAKES IT VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR SMALL PARTIES AND REGIONAL OR INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES TO GAIN SEATS. MITSOTAKIS' INTERESTS HERE COINCIDE WITH THOSE OF THE COMMUNISTS, PAPANDREOU AND OTHER SMALL GROUPS ON THE LEFT AND FAR RIGHT OF THE GREEK POLITICAL SPECTRUM.)

4. COMMENT: MITSOTAKIS' PUBLIC APPEARANCE OFFERED NO SURPRISES AND THE MAIN PURPOSE OF HIS PRESS CONFERENCE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN TO GET HIM BACK ON THE POLITICAL STAGE. HIS TARGETS QUITE CLEARLY ARE GREEK CENTRIST VOTERS, WHO, HE IS CONVINCED, FORM THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE ELECTORATE. MITSOTAKIS IS MUCH TOO CLEVER AND REALISTIC TO BELIEVE THAT THE UDC IS ABOUT TO FALL APART OR THAT THERE WILL BE A STAMPEDE IN HIS DIRECTION. RATHER, HIS IMMEDIATE AIM APPEARS TO BE TO ESTABLISH A SUCCESSFUL REGIONAL BASE IN CRETE AS HE REACHES FOR AN EVENTUAL NATIONAL CONSTITUENCY. THE NEXT STEP IN HIS CAMPAIGN, WE UNDERSTAND, IS A SPEECH IN CRETE WHERE HE WILL MORE DIRECTLY TAKE ON THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP OF THE UDC.

5. THUS FAR, IN ATHENS AND OUTSIDE, WE HAVE DETECTED NO GREAT RESONANCE FROM MITSOTAKIS' PRESS CONFERENCE, THOUGH IT DID GET RELATIVELY WIDE PUBLICITY. THE GENERAL REACTION SEEMS TO BE ONE OF SKEPTICISM OVER WHAT HE IS TRYING TO DO AND HIS ABILITY TO MAKE A COMEBACK. HIS ABILITIES ARE WIDELY RECOGNIZED, BUT MOST OBSERVERS FIND IT HARD TO IDENTIFY WHERE HE CAN OCCUPY POSITION OF LEADERSHIP IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL LINEUP. BUT MITSOTAKIS' PURPOSE WAS TO AGAIN ENTER THE PUBLIC ARENA, NOT TO TAKE IT OVER. AND HE SEEMS TO HAVE ACHIEVED THIS GOAL. WE WILL BE HEARING MORE FROM HIM AND ABOUT HIM IN THE MONTHS AHEAD.

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## Message Attributes

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